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## NEW BOOKS REVIEWED

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THE WORLD CRISIS AND ITS MEANING. By Felix Adler. New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1915.

Because of the natural tendency to identify moral intuition with moral ideals, or with moral dogma, it is easy to fall into the fallacy of supposing that ethical thought is necessarily either visionary or narrow. That it may be both broad and practical one may learn from such a book as Felix Adler's *The World Crisis and its Meaning*. Mr. Adler reasons ethically—not ideally nor dogmatically. He betrays neither the narrowness of the censor of morals nor that of the propagandist; he neither dreams the dream of the militarist nor follows after the vision of the unpractical peace enthusiast.

The idea underlying Mr. Adler's ethical discourses is essentially the same as that which David Jayne Hill has developed in his admirable treatise, *The People's Government*. In the bare idea—the idea of “mutual obligation,” as it is called by Dr. Hill, or “interdependence,” as Mr. Adler terms it—there is, of course, nothing absolutely new. “Charity,” “tolerance,” “service”—even the popular catchword “efficiency”—all these words point, more or less clearly, to the principle involved. But the application of the principle is too frequently narrow and personal. Charity remains in many minds mere sentiment, tolerance is regarded as a synonym for complaisance, service as a general term for works of supererogation, and efficiency as a name for success. To develop the idea of human interdependence, to enrich it by a broad and practical application to vexing problems, to reveal it as fundamental and impersonal: to do this is to advance thought and morals. Mr. Adler's discourses fall somewhat short of philosophic thoroughness and completeness, but they are more than preachments.

Just what the author means by “interdependence” is best seen in his chapter entitled “An Ethical Program of Social Reform.” “To live rightly,” declares Mr. Adler, “is to live so as to release life in others.” It is only by so doing that one may attain to the maximum of one's own spiritual possibilities. Nor does concentra-

tion upon this spiritual ideal tend to make one indifferent to material need. The case is just the reverse: over-emphasis of the notion of material improvement does retard spiritual growth. We are to seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness; then material gifts will follow as the result of our efforts directed to an immaterial end. Goodness, in the sense of refraining from sin and at the same time giving free play to benevolent instincts, often proves strangely unsatisfactory and "inefficient." What we need to learn, in order to escape from the tyranny of the Law and of our impulses, is to live in such a way that by enhancing our own worth we enhance the worth of others. This is the true romance; this is the "sum to trick the arithmetic"—"base," indeed—of crass materiality, because it includes material things in the equation without making them the determining factors.

Certainly the rule works well enough as applied to the relations of individuals. The finest element in friendship, in marriage, in all the loyalties that bind men closest, is supplied by what Mr. Adler calls "the dynamic inter-potency of lives." But is the rule practical in the larger sense? Does it apply with equal effectiveness to relations between groups or classes? Mr. Adler believes that it does. Social groups may and should vitalize one another like individuals. In this way every function is enhanced and lifted above the level of the unintellectual and the unspiritual. "The perfection of the function of the agriculturalist is seen in the reaction upon the sciences upon which agriculture is dependent. This reaction, itself consciously adopted as an aim, will mean the elevation of agriculture to the level of a liberal vocation. The farmer while tilling the soil will at the same time be tilling his inner mental field. In striving to contribute to the perfection of the function he will be mentally perfecting himself."

Upon the same principle, the author finds a middle ground between the extreme of militarism and the extreme of pacifism—a middle ground that is more solid than compromise. A war of defence, he shows, may be just; to reason otherwise is to accept the doctrine of non-resistance in its fullest implication; it is—so far as the eye of reason can see—to grant that might should be permitted to triumph over right. But to affirm this, is by no means to concede that war may be in itself a good. At the root of the matter lies the conception that every nation's rights are indissolubly bound up with the rights of every other nation, and this conception furnishes a test by which just and unjust warfare may be unfailingly distinguished.

The system of "militarist ethics" has already been pretty thoroughly riddled by the attacks of those who represent not pacificism but the ordinary views of enlightened humanity. Mr. Adler's analysis of the subject is simple and searching. Certainly, if there is any truth in the doctrine of "interdependence" or "mutual obliga-

tion"—if this doctrine is indeed securely based upon Christian ethics or upon moral intuition—there could be no greater error, as the author points out, than to judge an action not according to its products but according to its by-products. For behind the reasoning which justifies war on the ground that it schools men in honor and heroism lurks the assumption that all virtues are but by-products, and that they must be sought through indirection. It is easy to perceive the modicum of truth in this sweeping major premise of the militarist syllogism; it is necessary also to realize that this assumption involves a radical confusion of ideas—the confusion of virtue with virtues, of character—as a congeries of desirable habits—with morality. Courage may be a by-product, self-sacrifice may be a by-product, almost any single virtue may be a by-product; but the will to do right is not a by-product. The love of God and of one's neighbor cannot be incidental values acquired in the pursuit of a selfish or indifferent end. These things are either fundamental or they are nothing at all.

If fundamental morality is hostile to militarism, then surely it is friendly to peace. But just here it is important to bear in mind the distinction between fundamental morality and the ideals that may be built upon it. An ideal is a work of the imagination and may partake of illusion. Just as the world crisis is forcing men to face the eternal verities and to decide whether they stand indeed for truth or merely for profound error, so it has shocked men out of the egregious illusion that the world is, in a moral sense, highly civilized. And though the war has staggered and sickened humanity, it does not follow that at its conclusion we shall enter upon an era of permanent peace. Then as always it will be an illusion to suppose that what ought to be, may be immediately attained. Yet to doubt that the ideal of universal peace will ultimately be realized is to renounce belief in progress. This Mr. Adler refuses to do because he believes that faith is creative. As a true meliorist he seeks to justify his faith by making it practical. Good-will, he shows, is the foundation of peace, and good-will is simply the clear recognition of spiritual independence. This principle, notwithstanding the work of the Hague Tribunal and the signing of many treaties of arbitration, has never been thoroughly applied. "When not only the governments through their agents meet," writes the author, "but the people meet through their representatives, the labor delegates, the merchant delegates, the delegates of the peasantry and the rest, then should be exemplified what appears to me to be a psychological truth, namely, that justice, fairness, respect for rights, are produced when we see and hear the very person who claims to have those rights . . . assert them, expound them, plead for them."

In general the conclusions reached by Mr. Adler are precisely as rational as they are moral. His discourses are more inspiring than most moral exhortations and sounder than most philosophies.